

PLANNING COMMISSION

ACTION MINUTES

TUESDAY, JANUARY 4, 2000

Chair Parsons called the meeting to order at 7:08 p.m. at Twin Pines Senior and Community Center.

PRESENT, COMMISSIONERS: Phillips, Mathewson, Peirona, Purcell, Parsons

ABSENT, COMMISSIONER: Wiecha (arrived at 7:37 p.m.)

PRESENT, STAFF: Director Vanderprien, Associate Planner Livingstone, City Attorney Savaree, Recording Secretary Wong

AGENDA STUDY SESSION: Director Vanderprien announced that a condition was received today from South County Fire regarding 1768 Terrace Drive which stated that "an approved water supply capable of supplying the required fire flow for fire protection shall be provided...".

AGENDA AMENDMENTS: MOTION: By Commissioner Purcell, seconded by Commissioner Mathewson to amend the agenda to move item #7C, public hearing for 1768 Terrace Dr. ahead of item #6A, preliminary design review for 1040 Alameda de las Pulgas. The motion passed.

COMMUNITY FORUM (Public Comments): None.

CONSENT CALENDAR

Action Minutes of December 7, 1999

MOTION: By Commissioner Mathewson, seconded by Commissioner Peirona to approve the minutes. The motion passed with Commissioners Phillips and Purcell abstaining.

Public Hearing - 1768 Terrace Dr.; To consider a floor area ratio (FAR) exception to allow 3,527 sq. ft. where 3,500 sq. ft. is permitted. The existing square footage is 3,499 sq. ft. The addition of floor area would be entirely within the existing building envelope and would involve converting an un-conditioned crawl space of approximately 28 sq. ft. on the lower floor of the existing (under construction) home to conditioned floor area (Appl. No. 99-1138); APN: 044-091-280; Zoning: R-1B; CEQA Status: Exempt; Dary Sepah-Mansour (Applicant/Owner)

Director Vanderprien presented the staff report recommending approval of the FAR exception with conditions and the additional condition from South County as discussed above.

Chair Parsons asked if the applicant would like to speak to which Mr. Sepah-Mansour replied negatively.

Chair Parsons opened the public hearing. No one came forward to speak.

MOTION: By Commissioner Peirona, seconded by Commissioner Purcell to close the public hearing. The motion passed.

Chair Parsons announced that he and Commissioner Wiecha had visited the site. Commissioner Mathewson stated that he had visited the site also.

MOTION: By Commissioner Peirona, seconded by Commissioner Purcell to approve Resolution No. 2000-01 approving a floor area ratio exception at 1768 Terrace Drive as stated in the staff report.

AYES: Phillips, Mathewson, Peirona, Purcell, Parsons

ABSENT: Weicha

Chair Parsons announced that the Commission's decision could be appealed to the City Council within 10 days.

DESIGN REVIEW

Preliminary Design Review - 1040 Alameda de las Pulgas; To consider a Master Plan for the Church of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. The Master Plan includes construction of a multi-use building and rectory for the Church, as well as a three-story, 77-unit senior residential care building to be operated by Sunrise, Inc. The Master Plan also includes alteration of existing rectory for Parish offices and upgrading the existing Church for accessibility (Appl. No. 99-1110)

APN: 045-023-230, -250, and -260; Zoned: PD/A; Rev. James McDonald (Applicant);

Roman Catholic Archbishop of San Francisco (Owner)

Director Vanderpriem presented the staff report.

Dan Zemanek, Sunrise Assisted Living, thanked the Commissioners and Elaine Farmer for touring the three Sunrise facilities on November 6, 1999. He noted that the land lease agreement would be for 50 years and that the applicant was working with the Department of Fish and Game and Christine Fisher, a natural resource conservationist consultant on streambed issues. The building had been pulled back from the creek. Mr. Zemanek felt that being in proximity to the elementary school would be positive because the intergenerational activities were extremely important to the daily lives of the seniors living in the facility. He added that the bridge over the creek was a very important element to the project. Mr.

Zemanek stated that they would try to minimize disturbance of the existing vegetation and construct a bridge that would be aesthetically pleasing and environmentally sound. The residential care building would be a 40-foot tall 3-story building which would be approximately 14 feet taller than the existing 26-foot tall structure. The eucalyptus trees between Ralston and the building were 34 to 46 feet tall and would create a great buffer. An illusion of a shorter building and the mechanical equipment on the roof would not be visible as one descended the grade from east to west on Ralston Avenue. The north side of the building had been softened to minimize the look and feel of the 20-foot setback. There would be 25 parking spaces for the 77 units. Since the last meeting, the architects had been able to design an additional unit without adding to the building size. Responding to the concerns expressed by Judi Allen, a resident on Alameda de las Pulgas, at the September 21 Commission meeting about traffic exiting onto Ralston from the site, a traffic study was conducted and it was determined that there would not be any traffic impacts at that intersection as a result of the Sunrise facility. The traffic engineer estimated that nine vehicle trips would be added during the morning rush hour to an existing count of 3,070 cars and 18 vehicle trips would be added during the evening rush hour to an existing count of 3,149 cars, a .03% increase in the morning and a .06% increase in the evening. Responding to Ms. Allen's suggestion that the "messy" eucalyptus trees be replaced, the proposal was to intersperse the existing trees with species that would probably be much more appropriate for the site than the existing trees and when they grew to a substantial height then the eucalyptus trees would be removed. Mr. Zemanek stated that he hoped that the Commission, after hearing Jerry McDevitt's comments about what they had done to mitigate the Commission's concerns, would be allowed the project to proceed to the public hearing stage. He invited the commissioners to tour their recently opened facility at 955 El Camino Real in San Mateo.

Jerry McDevitt, Dieterick Mithun, 414 Olive Way, Ste. 500, Seattle, WA reviewed several possible traffic schemes and emphasized the strong potential of the intergenerational garden provided by the site. Suggested improvements had been implemented in the revised site plan: reduced the square footage of the building and pulled it away from the creek, angled the parking to reduce several feet off the length of the parking so that there would be more landscaping in front of the building, and revised the interior plan to face the common areas out onto the garden. He distributed 11" x 17" copies of the arborist's report to the commissioners.

Commissioner Wiecha arrived at 7:37 p.m.

Mr. McDevitt stated that in order to minimize the height of the building, the projecting shower bays end at the top of the second floor and the impact of the gable roof was reduced. He discussed the color scheme, roof lines, and distributed photographs showing the view from the common areas.

Chair Parsons asked if anyone would like to speak. No one came forward to speak.

Responding to the Commission, Mr. McDevitt replied that: 1) the parking lot was pushed about seven feet closer to the building, was 16 feet from the street, and the bay setback was approximately two feet; 2) the retaining wall on the Alameda side had not been discussed with the owner and was being studied; 3) the chain link fence on top of the retaining wall on the Ralston side would be replaced with a lower, 42" high rail, hopefully transparent fence; 4) with regard to the other side of the wall, facing from the building and gardens, they would probably propose applying a thin layer of concrete over the existing surface and planting heavily; 5) there would be a maximum of approximately 20 staff members on site between 11:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. and 6) there would be 25 parking spaces, but added that typically some staff was either dropped off or used public transportation. He explained how the trash would be removed.

The Commission's comments included: concerned about a 23" oak tree near the bridge; concerned with the elevations on Ralston Avenue; would not want to be one of the people who would have to move the trash bins halfway around the building to access the container; concerned with the width and general mass of the bridge; concerned with access over the bridge and preserving the fauna that would be affected and the safety of the residents making sure that the bridge was sufficient for emergency vehicles; concerned about what the grading would do to the oak tree and the creek; felt that the wall at the intersection and the fencing on top of the retaining wall going up the hill were major visual impacts and had to be fixed; an enclosure would be needed for the dumpsters by the service road; building height was no longer an issue; felt that the proposal was very close to where it could be supported if it could be shown that some environmental issues would not be in jeopardy; liked the clientele entrances and the intergenerational garden; and asked if truck-turn templates were used on the plans.

The applicant responded to the Commission's comments: an arborist had stated that there were ways to save the oak tree and they would take whatever measures were necessary to do so; there would probably be some type of hybrid trash room near the kitchen and then at certain hours of the day, particularly on trash pick-up days, it would be pulled to the other end of the building; and if the bridge was narrowed, then the orientation would have to be changed but it worked as presently designed.

Chair Parsons summarized that in general there was a consensus that this was a good concept and applauded the applicant for convincing them about the orientation of the building.

At 8:14 p.m., Chair Parsons called for a recess. The meeting reconvened at 8:24 p.m.

Preliminary Design Review - 2440 Carlmont Dr.; To consider a conceptual site plan for demolition of existing Jewish Community Center buildings and construction of three-story structures to provide 60 townhouses and flats ranging from 1,100 to 1,700 sq. ft. in size. Plan includes covered parking and site amenities such as swimming pool complex and pedestrian trail (Appl. No. 99-1119); APN: 045-031-010; Zoning: R-3; Summerhill Homes (Applicant); Peninsula Jewish Community Center (Owner)

Chair Parsons mentioned that the number of units had been reduced to 52. Director Vanderprieem stated that the applicant had made a number of significant changes in response to the Commission's direction and the revised plans came in after the noticing of the item, which included a few more units than currently proposed. Director Vanderprieem presented the staff report.

Elaine Breeze, Summerhill Homes, pointed out the key features of the revised proposal: most of the buildings had been broken up to four-plexes; the road was widened to accommodate backups, and the site plan was flipped 70 degrees.

Chair Parsons asked if anyone would like to speak. No one came forward to speak.

Responding to questions from the Commission, Ms. Breeze replied that: 1) the setback would be 20 feet from the sidewalk to the house walls on Carlmont Drive; 2) the overall density would be 10.4 units per acre; 3) there would be more planter pockets by breaking up the buildings and having single-car garages; 4) the pool would be fenced, the trail would not be fenced, and there would be some sort of fencing at the top of the trail because of the steep drop; 5) there would be a link to the Water Dog Trail and more pedestrian orientation within the site; 6) there would be a minimum of 10'-deep private patios and it had not been determined whether they would be fenced.

Ms. Breeze was also concerned about the detached garages from a marketing perspective, but noted that there would be a retaining wall so that the garages would not be that visible from the street with plantings on both sides.

The Commission's comments included: was concerned about the pedestrian circulation, concerned about the location of the garages and guest parking spaces and suggested that the applicant look at the Belmont Woods neighborhood such as the corner of Ralston and Hallmark to see how the parking and garages had been integrated; thought that the number of units would need to be reduced in order to accommodate sidewalks and more landscaping; would not be aesthetically pleasing if all of the roadways were asphalt; more thought given to the pool area, views from the pool and the trail, and the interaction of the pedestrian area with Water Dog Trail and any security issues regarding proximity to the trail and the units; and felt that the project was a lot better than the initial proposal and appreciated the applicant addressing the concerns of the Commission.

Lance Rohrer, Manager, Carlmont Woods Apartments, 2515 Carlmont Dr., suggested that the corner be looked at since there had been several vehicular accidents there in the last two years. He said that this was a dangerous blind curve when drivers were looking for parking on the street. Mr. Roarer stated that currently there were probably 20-30 cars parked in the JCL parking lot instead of on the street and most of the street parking was taken every night.

Ms. Breeze stated that the project would not start for about 18 months and would probably last about that long. Chair Parsons suggested that a traffic engineer look at the project if there was a history of accidents. Ms. Breeze said that the JCL had about five entrances which exacerbated that.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

Continued Public Hearing - 900 Sixth Av.; To consider a modification to the detailed development plan to alter the landscape plan and eliminate the proposed entrance on Sixth Avenue (Appl. No. 99-1134); APN: 045-152-540 and -570; Zoning: P.D.; CEQA Status: Exempt; Robert Tucker, Hardison, Komatsu, Ivelich & Tucker (Applicant); Paradigm Health Care L.P. (Owner)

Director Vanderpriem gave a brief history of the project since noticing the missing retaining wall and stated that this item was the subject of a special Council meeting the previous week. Following that meeting, he prepared an e-mail to the Commission outlining the opinions and direction of the four Councilmembers who were in attendance. The issue that brought the project to the special meeting had to do with the construction of the project inconsistent with the approved building plans. He showed overheads illustrating the items to be discussed. Either at the end of October or early in November 1999, before the retaining wall by the sidewalk was poured and while the concrete splitface block wall was being constructed, Director Vanderpriem had noticed that it appeared higher than what was approved, and it was subsequently determined by the Building Official that the plans being used at the construction site were not the approved set. A stop work order was issued and a meeting was held between John Livingstone, project planner, building official, the City Attorney and the City Manager, who provided an opportunity for the applicant to continue constructing the walls at their own risk in order to not totally stop the project but provided that they sign a letter agreeing that they were doing so at their own risk and that they might need to make modifications to the project to return it back to what was originally approved. That agreement was signed and delivered to the City and construction again commenced. Another stop work order was issued on December 22 as there was a concern that some of the construction might preclude some options for corrections to the site. The project was then brought to the City Council at a Special Meeting so the history of the project and the direction that it was taking could be discussed. Director Vanderpriem stated that the key issues were that the original approved plan had a series of three retaining walls at the southern part of the site by Ralston Avenue, and the project was designed and built with just two retaining walls since the intermediary wall was added to the upper wall, making a larger upper wall. The building pad or ultimate height of the building had not been changed, however, staff had dealt mostly with grading changes and retaining wall changes between the pad and the street and this was a very critical area as it was viewed from Ralston Avenue. In addition, the elevator which was to be entered from Sixth Avenue was eliminated at this stage as there was no entrance for it, although it was still on the approved set of plans. From these special meetings, there was a discussion about the elevator: one Councilmember thought it could be deleted, one would like it retained, another could go either way, and another would like to see some other

options. There was a consensus that the intermediary wall should be put back in on the site as it would create a more terraced look. Director Vanderpriem then reviewed the drawings and numbers in detail, noting that both the two- and three-wall concept ended up with about the same amount of vertical wall space, so that it became more of an aesthetic judgment. He also showed a drawing depicting a possible elevator configuration that tied in with the proposed sidewalk area. To recap, Director Vanderpriem stated that the elevator was still an issue and the Commission had the option of recommending that it be built as it was originally approved, deleting it, or looking at some other options. Director Vanderpriem said that it would be useful to consider how the entrance would look from the Sixth and Ralston intersection, and how useful the elevator would be vs. the impact of having it be built there and having the entranceway going under the building. Director Vanderpriem had asked different entities to determine what percentage of people would be expected to walk to shopping independently and was advised that from 10 to 20% of the residents would make a trip a couple of times a week. Using the higher estimate he concluded that basically four people per day would use the elevator to access the downtown area. In addition, there might be other reasons for having the elevator there, i.e., moving furniture, staff walking to the bus stop, and deliveries. The decision about the elevator was a critical component of the grading and foundation work and needed to be made as early as possible. He added that there was still a partial stop work order on the project and there were certain portions of the project such as the foundation which could not go ahead until the issue was settled. The issue of the retaining walls was clearly aesthetic at this point and the applicant had indicated a willingness to put in the retaining wall, to do a different type of facing on the retaining wall, to pretty much make modifications as the Commission may direct. The intermediary wall could be put in, however, any other changes to the site plan, i.e., the addition of a walkway at the top wall or the addition of an elevator feature would affect the landscaping of the site and a revised landscape plan would be needed to address any changes that occurred.

Responding to the Commission, Director Vanderpriem explained the need for a handrailing and landscape changes.

Chair Parsons stated that the Commission was thoroughly confused by the barrage of the variety of drawings, different scales, different proposals, and no coordination. Chair Parsons wanted to see a complete set of new drawings so he could understand what was being built. Chair Parsons said that he had never seen so many changes without approval coming to the Commission. Chair Parsons stated that the Commission agreed that the project was a mess and it was not because the Commission or staff made it a mess. The Commission wanted to see the project built but they were thoroughly confused. As far as giving guidance to staff, he thought that the issue of the elevator was one that was discussed when the project came through initially; the owners and architects proposed it and explained that it was a good idea and would get the residents down to the senior center, park, shopping center, and restaurants that were located within a block of the project. He asked for a show of hands from the Commission with regard to including the elevator. Commissioner Purcell stated that she hesitated to raise her hand because she was concerned that the elevator required a railing and caused a loss of landscaping at the top of the extremely tall retaining wall; while she supported an elevator, it was extremely difficult to separate the retaining wall issue from the elevator issue. She felt that the whole

concept of what the streetscape would look like had been radically altered by this seemingly small change. Chair Parsons felt that they needed to have more options shown to them for placement of the elevator, they needed some consistency in drawings, some consistency in scale, and he'd like to see a drawing that showed the existing retaining walls.

The Commission's comments included: felt very strongly about maintaining the elevator because resident access was extremely important and that the van service should exist; felt that the project was marketed to the Commission as an assisted living center and the residents must have the freedom to be able to move around, and offering up a van service as an alternative to that freedom was eliminating a freedom of choice for the prospective residents; when the project was initially discussed, he was very much in favor of increasing the amount of space outdoors for common areas and some of those spaces were reduced; still wanted to see areas where the residents would have the opportunity to walk around and would like to see more of that area incorporated into the plan; did not want to spend any more time reviewing the project tonight until he saw a complete set of plans showing the alternatives; concerned that if a railing was put above the wall, then it would increase the total elevation of the wall; would like to see a proposal include an elevator that would not eliminate all the landscaping at the top of the retaining wall and require the railing; would like to be able to evaluate how much of a visual benefit the intermediate wall would be; suggested a stepped feature for the fascia blocks on the wall so they don't randomly end; noted that the pockets on the wall were not set plumb but at a right angle to the sidewalk and street; thought that the Commission had discussed putting a facing on the retaining wall at the end of the property adjacent to the Woodmont property; had not heard why the middle wall would be structurally unsound; would not be in favor of any option that contained an additional handrail at the top so that would preclude the walkway; and urged the landscape architect to be extremely detailed and accurate about the landscaping because of the retaining wall issue.

Responding to the Commission, Director Vanderpriem replied that: 1) the sprinkler system would be part of the sprinkler system that fed the street trees and would be installed with the sidewalk in front of the wall; 2) if the Commission wished to have the pockets on the wall straightened out, then they would be narrowed from the current 14" down to 10"; 3) staff would work with the applicant and try to bring the best set of plans to the Commission; 4) the Commission had approved a landscaping treatment in front of the retaining wall adjacent to the Woodmont property, however, if the Commission would like to have that as part of the offsetting features for these other changes, then that could be implemented; 5) there was no documentation that the middle wall would be structurally unsound and did not believe that it would be impossible to build since it was designed by an engineer, and checked by another engineer before the building permit was issued.

Chair Parsons wanted to get the project on track if at all possible but they must have a concise set of drawings with enough information so that they could understand what they were looking at.

Elaine Farmer, President of Central Neighborhood Association, stated that she had attended numerous meetings on this project. She said that developers and real estate people continually complained about Belmont and the reception they received. Now it was her concern that the plans accepted by the Commission be followed to the letter. Ms. Farmer then announced, "remember the Blockbuster."

MOTION: By Commissioner Peirona, seconded by Commissioner Wiecha to continue the public hearing to February 1, 2000. The motion passed.

Public Hearing - 1070 Sixth Ave. (City Hall); To consider City Hall plans for exterior remodel and addition; APN: 045-181-260 and -280; Zoning: C-2; CEQA Status: Exempt; City of Belmont (Applicant/Owner)

Director Vanderpriem presented the staff report recommending that the Commission adopt a motion recommending the conceptual design to the Council. Commissioner Purcell asked if the City departments had reviewed the interior plans to which Director Vanderpriem responded that there has been an extensive review of the floor plans by all the departments.

Christ Kamages, project architect, reiterated the Commission's comments from the previous meetings. He showed slides and boards describing the architectural concepts of the two options to the Commission.

Chair Parsons opened the public hearing. No one came forward to speak.

A brief discussion ensued between the Commission and Mr. Kamages.

MOTION: By Commissioner Wiecha, seconded by Commissioner Mathewson to close the public hearing. The motion passed.

MOTION: By Commissioner Parsons, seconded by Commissioner Mathewson to recommend to the City Council entry option A with a trellis and an "executive committee" made up of a number of representatives from City Council and the Planning Commission, be established to help make some of the refinements for this project. The motion passed.

REPORTS, STUDIES, UPDATES, AND COMMENTS

Responding to Chair Parsons, Director Vanderpriem advised that a joint meeting was scheduled for January 26 at 7:00 p.m. for the purpose of discussing the Walgreen's block. A staff report would be distributed beforehand asking for direction to pursue a request for proposals (RFP) for developer recruitment on that project.

Commissioner Phillips asked if any Planning Commissioners had been appointed to the General Plan Update Team and Director Vanderpriem responded that this could be put on the next agenda for discussion as to who would be representing the Commission.

The meeting adjourned at 10:41 p.m. to meet for a regular meeting on January 18, 2000.

Dan Vanderpriem, AICP

Planning Commission Secretary